

## **NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE FEMINIZATION OF AGRICULTURE:**

**Anything that lowers women's food productivity  
threatens world food security!**

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### **Topics To Be Explored**

1. Chronic Hunger in Poor Countries
  2. The Current Global Food Crisis
  3. What Do Biofuels Have to Do with World Hunger?
  4. Threats to Women's Food Productivity
  5. Negative Impacts of the Globalized Food Chain & Export Agriculture
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## INCREASE IN NUMBERS OF MALNOURISHED PEOPLE IN POOR COUNTRIES, 1997-2007

There has been nearly a 7% increase in the number of malnourished people in the world over the last decade.

Year	Number in Millions	% Increase over Previous Decade
1997	800	----
2007	854	6.8%

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization

## Where are the world's malnourished people? 2007

90% of the world's malnourished people are located in Asia and Africa where the primary grains consumed by humans and livestock are rice and corn.

Region	Number of Malnourished People in millions	% of the World's Malnourished people
<b>ALL OF ASIA</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>61.4%</b>
China	150	17.6%
India	212	24.8%
<b>ALL OF AFRICA</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>28.6%</b>
North Africa	38	4.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	206	24.1%
<b>LATIN AMERICA/ CARIBBEAN</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
<b>EASTERN EUROPE</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
Poor Countries	820	96%
Rich Countries	9	1%
World	854	

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization

## **THE LATEST MALNUTRITION STATISTICS:**

- ★ **1/3 Third World children are chronically malnourished**
- ★ **1/3 Third World pregnant women are malnourished**
- ★ **55% Third World child deaths linked to malnutrition**
- ★ **Worldwide, the primary cause of hunger = poverty  
NOT population growth**

**In poor countries, malnutrition rates have NOT dropped  
when population growth rates have declined significantly!**

Source: *United Nations Human Development Report, 2002*

# Food Protests in Poor Countries

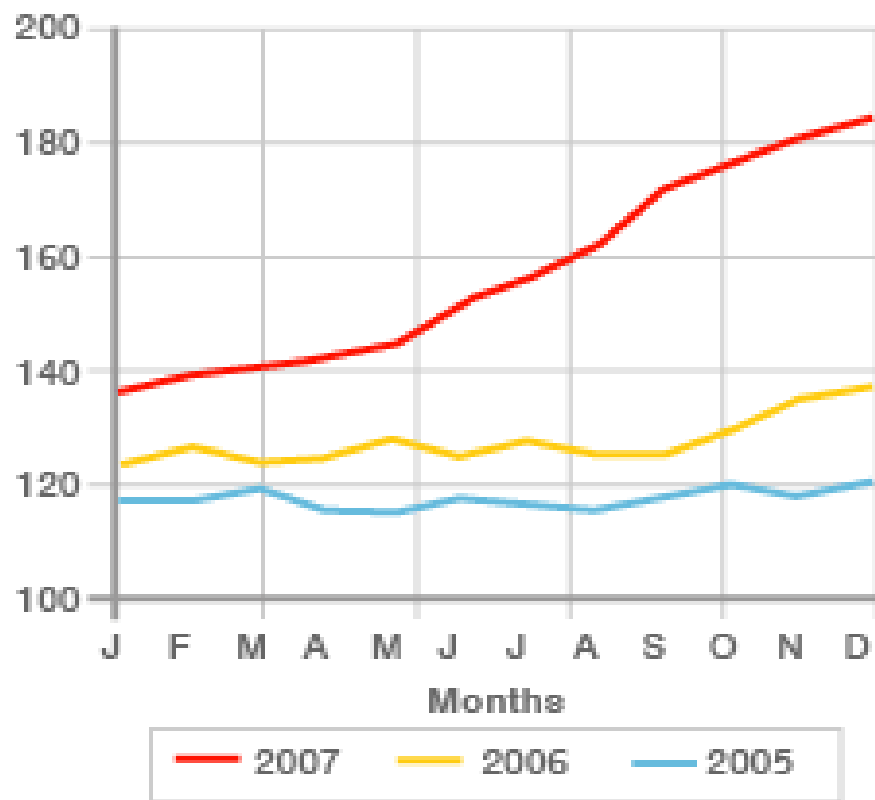


- Like this mass rally in the Philippines, food protests, riots, and strikes have already occurred in 22 countries, and the United Nations predicts that unrest will occur in 40 more countries.

# The Global Food Crisis

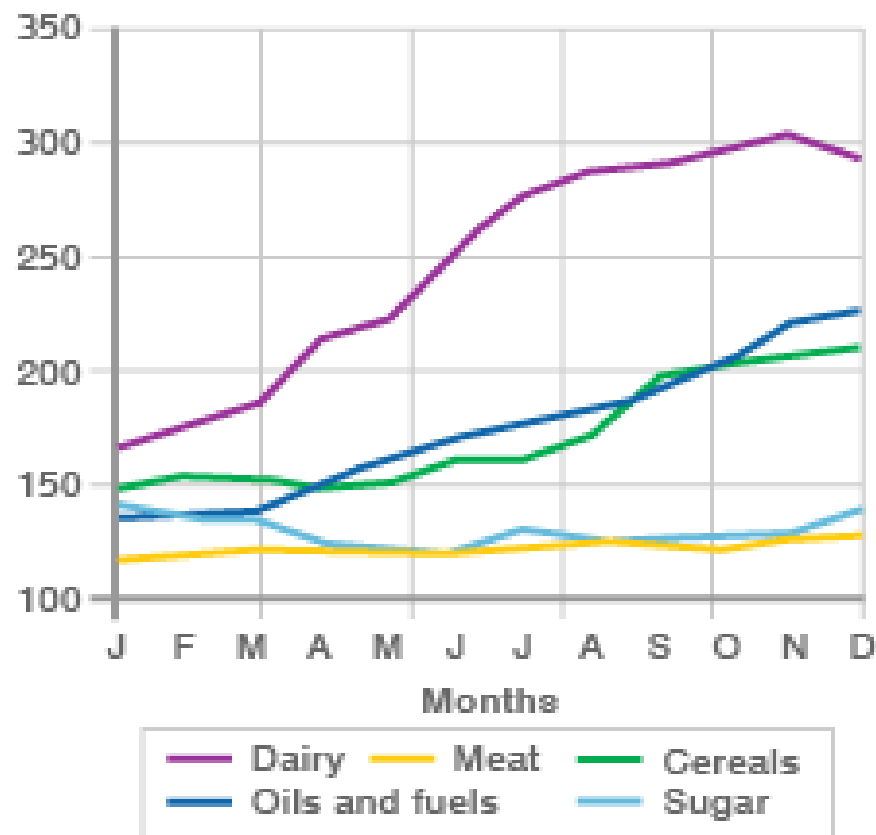
**RISING FOOD PRICES, 2005-2007**

1998-2000 = 100\*



**PRICES RISES BY FOOD TYPE, 2007**

1998-2000 = 100\*



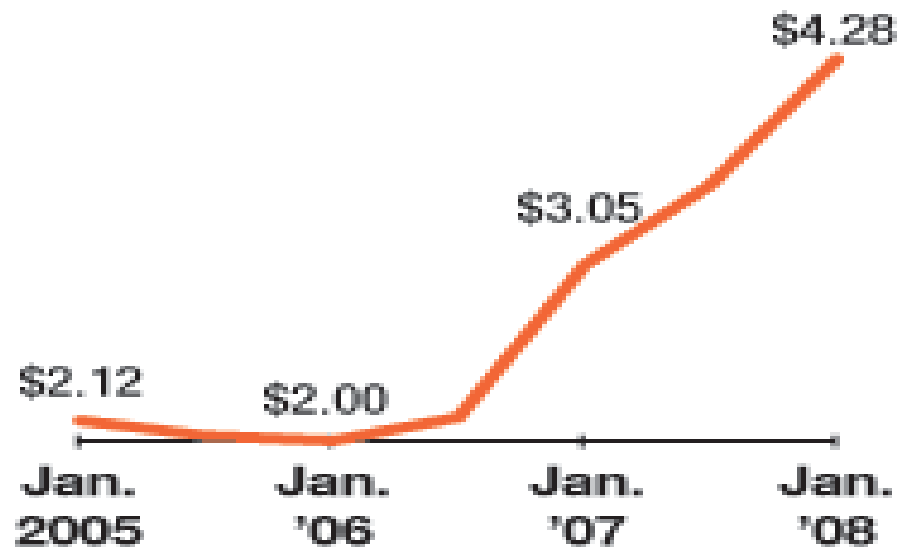
\*Changes in price are indexed against the costs dating from 1998-2000

SOURCE: Source: FAO

# Rising Grain Prices

## Soaring Corn Prices

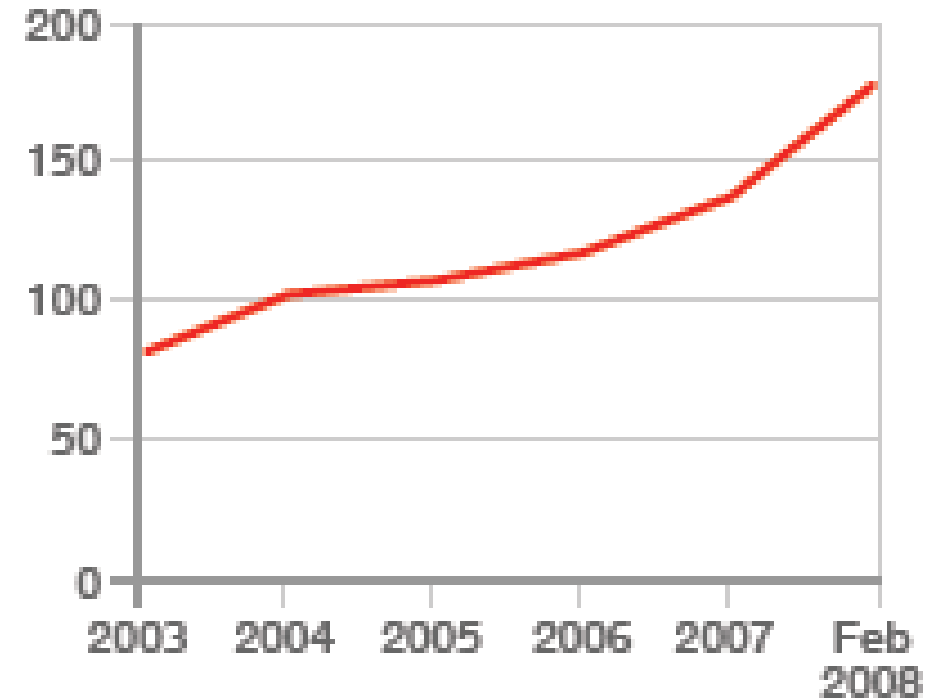
*(Dollars per bushel)*



SOURCE: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

## PRICE OF RICE

Rice price index (1998/2000 = 100)



Note: the rice price index is based on 16 rice export quotations.

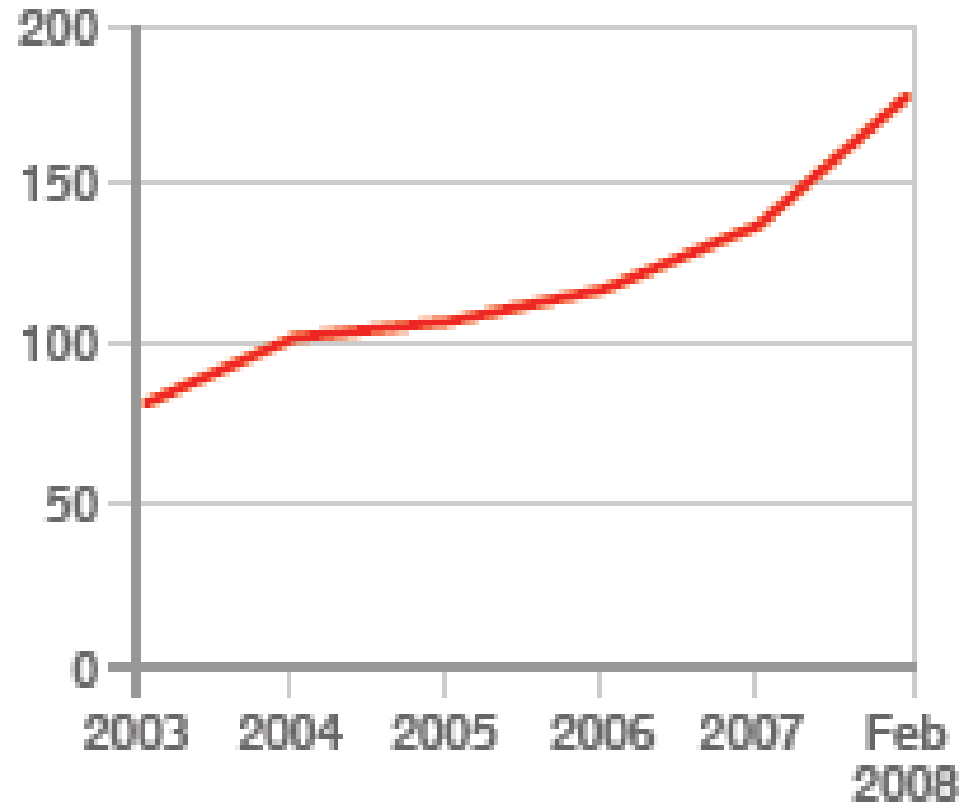
SOURCE: FAO

# Grain Price Increases March 2007 – March 2008

- Corn Up 31%
- Rice Up 74%
- Soya Up 87%
- Wheat Up 130%

## PRICE OF RICE

Rice price index (1998/2000 = 100)



Note: the rice price index is based on 16 rice export quotations.

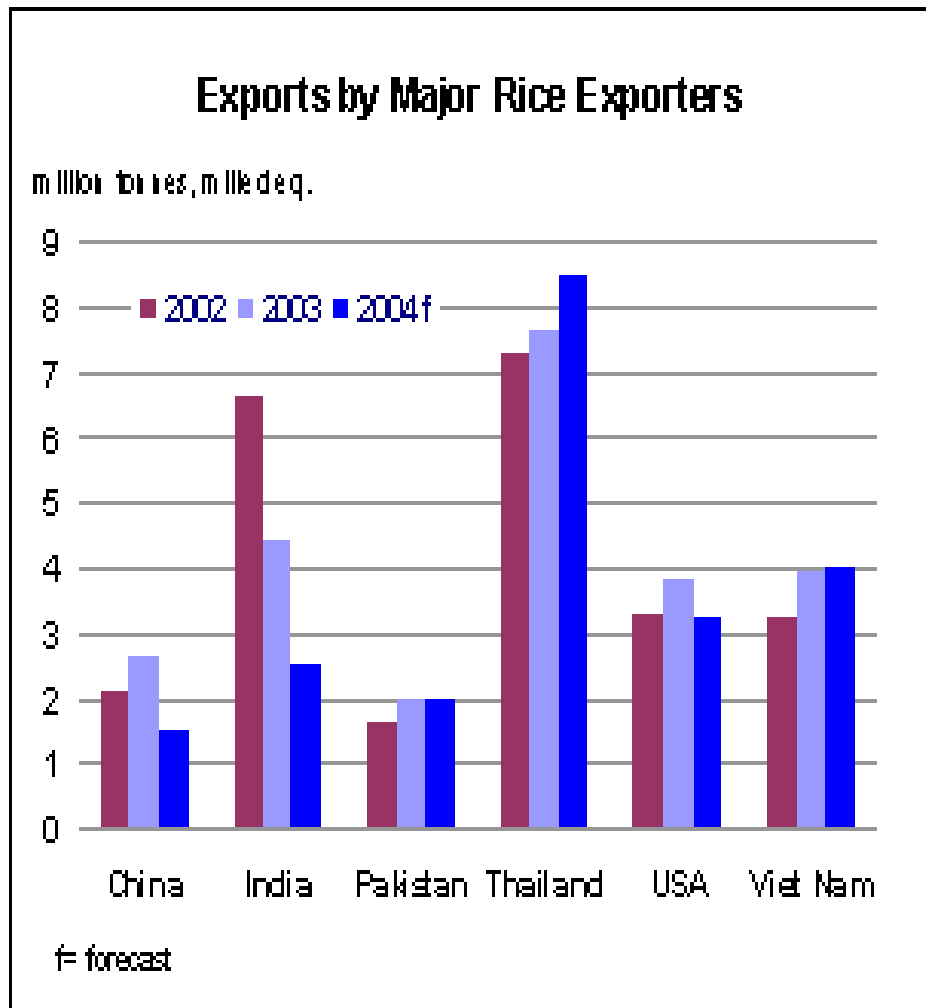
SOURCE: FAO

# Rice production is declining because of threats to women's productivity for local consumption.

- World rice output has dropped from 130 million tons in 2001 to 72 million tons in 2007.
- That will meet only 17% of world consumption.
- Rice is the staple food of 3.4 million people.



# Rice Exporters Have Banned Exports



- All the world's major exporters of rice (except the US) have now banned export of this grain.
- Low government rice stockpiles
- Insufficient world production

# Why do we have a world food crisis now?

This crisis did not just emerge two weeks ago, nor did chronic hunger in poor countries!

## 1. The globalized food chain

- ❑ A few multinational corporations control the global food chain to determine trade flows and set prices.
- ❑ Shift to export agriculture: more non-food crops for export, fewer local food crops
- ❑ Demand in rich countries drives production in poor countries: Rich countries consume most of the world's food while most of the world's population resides in poor countries.

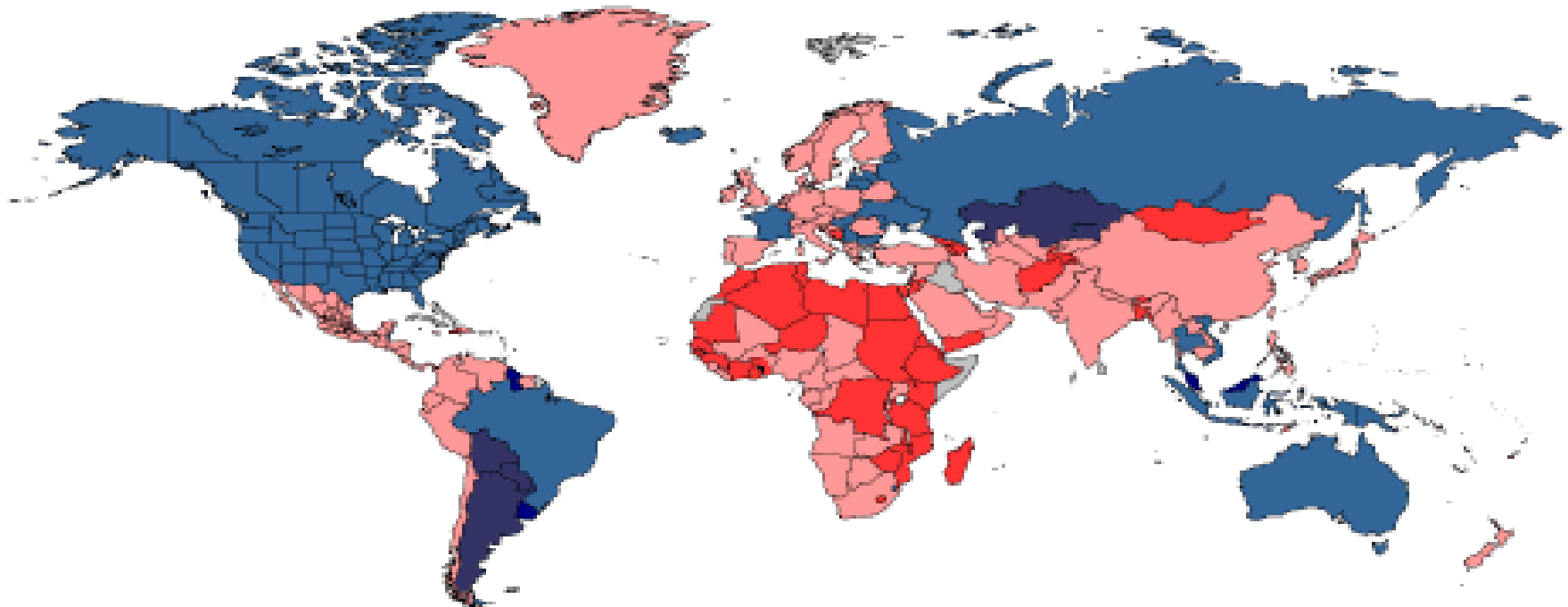
## 2. Food production is declining worldwide

- ❑ Rich countries are producing less food and importing more food from the poor countries.
- ❑ Export agriculture in poor countries uses land and resources to produce non-food crops and luxury crops. Consequently, less food is being produced for local consumption.
- ❑ Ecological degradation of land and ecosystems
- ❑ Debt & Structural Adjustment Programs: In order to repay external debts, poor countries are producing more agricultural exports and fewer local food crops.
- ❑ Impacts of the biofuels targets of USA and EU

**3. Less food produced for local consumption: Anything that lowers the agricultural productivity of women threatens world food security.**

# The Global Food Crisis: Who Wins? Who Loses?

2007 - 2008 IMPACT OF PROJECTED FOOD PRICE INCREASES ON  
TRADE BALANCES



- Large losers (trade balance worsening > 1% 2005 GDP)
- Moderate losers (trade balance worsening < 1% 2005 GDP)
- Moderate gainers (trade balance improving < 1% 2005 GDP)
- Large gainers (trade balance improving > 1% 2005 GDP)
- No data

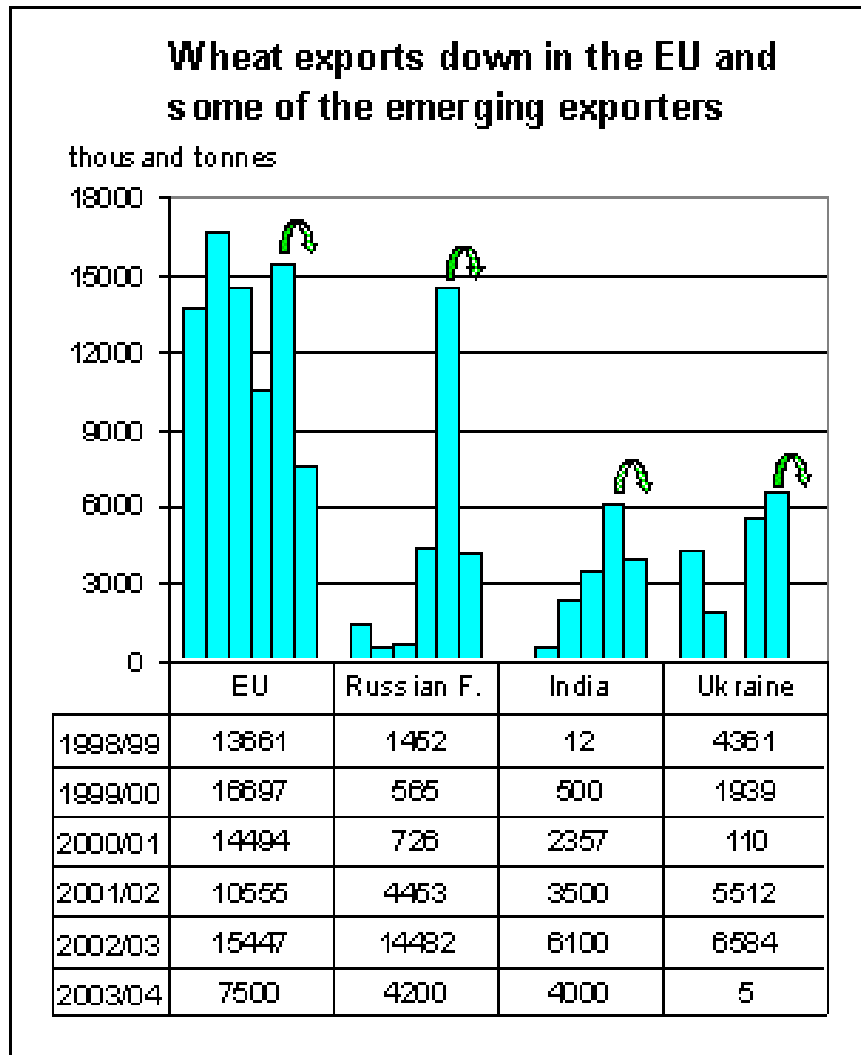
SOURCE: The World Bank

# What do biofuels have to do with world hunger? It is NOT just about prices.

## There are shortages!

- **The conservative International Monetary Fund** blames the biofuel target agendas of the US and the European Union for much of the increase in grain prices since 2006.
- **The United Nations position:** “Increasing the proportion of farmland devoted to biofuel cultivation is likely to be at the expense of producing food for the poor.”
- Since 2001: world rice production down 45% and wheat production down 20% in USA and Europe.
- Less of these grains ----- greater demand for corn in competition with biofuel production

# Impact of US Ethanol Production



- Government subsidized biofuel programs have caused a precipitous decline in the amount of land planted in wheat and soy.
- 16% of former wheat lands are now planted in corn for biofuel.
- Because the US is producing less, world wheat prices have risen.

# Impacts of the European Union Demand for Biofuel

- Palm oil is the primary biofuel used in EU, and it is imported in large quantities from tropical poor countries.
- Palm oil cultivation uses up grain lands, threatening the local food supply.
- Due to threats to food security for the poor, the United Nations has called for a 5 year moratorium on rich country targets for biofuel production.
- Oxfam has warned that 60 million indigenous peoples are at risk of being uprooted for biofuel plantations.
- Biofuel cooperatives in Brazil. Colombian paramilitaries have forced peasants from land to grow oil palm trees.
- Forced relocations in Indonesia.

# Impacts of the European Union Demand for Biofuel



- EU standard: **10% biofuel by 2010**
- Nearly 40% of European cropland will need to be converted to biofuel crops if the EU 10% target is to be met.
- EU countries will become even more dependent on poor countries to feed them. Oxfam: **“It is unacceptable that poor people in developing countries should bear the cost.”**

# Importance of Women's Work

**Anything that lowers women's  
agricultural productivity threatens  
world food security!**

## Women's Agricultural Work

- Women are responsible for more than half the world's food production.
- Men's roles in agriculture are declining in most poor countries
- In poor countries, most economically-active women work in agriculture.
- Women produce 60% to 80% of the world's rice, maize, and wheat; and they provide nearly 90% of the grains consumed by the rural poor in their own countries.
- In Southeast Asia, women provide 90% of the labor to cultivate rice.

## Women's Agricultural Work

- Women dominate food production on small household parcels.
- Women provide most of the labor (both waged and family) for many export crops.
- Women provide about one-third of the waged labor on larger farms and plantations.
- 70% of all girl waged laborers work in agriculture.

# Women dominate in rice production in most of Asia and Africa.



- Activities related to planting, weeding, harvesting, and processing are the domain of women. Males are primarily responsible for field preparation.
- Women alone cultivate subsistence rice on small plots.

## Who does the work to feed African and Asian rural households?

Task	% Work done by females	% work done by males
Clearing fields	5%	95%
Turning soil	30%	70%
Planting	50%	50%
Hoeing, weeding	70%	30%
Harvesting	60%	40%
Building or repairing irrigation ditches	65%	35%
Transporting crops	80%	20%
Storing	80%	20%
Processing	90%	10%
Marketing	60%	40%
Carrying water, fuel	90%	10%
Tending household livestock	50%	50%
Hunting	50%	50%
Feeding the family	95%	5%
Total average by gender	65%	35%

Source: Averages for African and Asian societies from Marilee Karl. 1995. *Women and Empowerment: Participation and Decisionmaking*. New York: United Nations, p. 107.

## INPUTS INTO THE GLOBALIZED FOOD CHAIN BY WOMEN OF POOR COUNTRIES

### Women's Paid Inputs

- ✓ **Operation of Small Farms:** 60 to 80% of farmers are females [owners, tenants, & sharecroppers]

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- ✓ **Small farmers** who subcontract to large plantations or corporations, a high% of them females

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- ✓ **Waged Workers** for farms & plantations: 30% to 40% are adult females + 70% of all girl laborers

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- ✓ **Informal sector inputs** by women: meals for workers, street vendors, trading in foods & fish in local markets

### Hidden Unpaid Household Inputs by Women

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- ☐ Women subsidize low wages through their nonagricultural labor portfolio and through unpaid household labor
- ☐ Household inputs into the production process, e.g., fertilizer, gathering natural resources, baskets/containers for harvesting, tool making & repair
- ☐ Assistance to adult male labor, including marketing or trading of outputs
- ☐ Unpaid household labor, child care, care for elderly

### Externalized Costs

- ★ Increased hunger and malnutrition
- ★ Rising food prices
- ★ Ecological degradation that results in inequitable health risks to females
- ★ Privatization of the commons results in loss of ecological subsistence resources
- ★ Increased female suicides resulting from unmanageable debts and/or increased debts of adult males
- ★ Increasing domestic violence during economic crises

# Why?



- **Women's food crop production has declined sharply over the last two decades.**
- **Note the tiny green sliver in this subsistence rice paddy. Women have planted only a small area of the available land.**

## **Threats to Women's Food Productivity**

1. Since 1980, there has been a 20% decline in women employed in agriculture in poor countries.
2. Privatization of public commons: loss of access to land, forests and fishing areas that were previously used to produce foods for subsistence and/or local markets.
3. Global warming: Major ecological threat to food production
  - ◆ Desertification in Africa (and all other desert or near-desert areas of the world)
  - ◆ Massive flooding in Asia (and all other coastal areas)
  - ◆ Increased number of natural disasters in tropical countries
  - ◆ Climate change (impacts on growing crops and growing season, e.g., decline in Chinese rice production in early 2008 due to changing climate conditions toward cooler temperatures)
4. Threats to household subsistence plots or to subsistence fishing/seafood activities
  - ◆ New government export targets
  - ◆ Ecological degradation caused by export crops
5. Shift to export agriculture
6. Introduction of genetically-modified crops
  - ◆ Government development programs train males to handle the required fertilizers and pesticides.
  - ◆ Greater health threats to females, especially when pregnant.
  - ◆ GM high-yielding seeds require more women's work: more transplanting, more weeding, more spraying. More work toward these crops means less time allocated to traditional household food crops.
7. Legal and social discrimination
  - ◆ Women own less than 1% of all the world's farm land. Laws, local customs, and inheritance practices do not protect women's access to land.
  - ◆ Limited access to credit
8. Female illiteracy
9. Inequitable health problems for women: For example, work in rice paddies leads to higher risk of malaria and shistosomiasis and high pregnancy risks.

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The first threat to women's food production is that the % of women in agriculture has declined by nearly 1/4 since 1980.

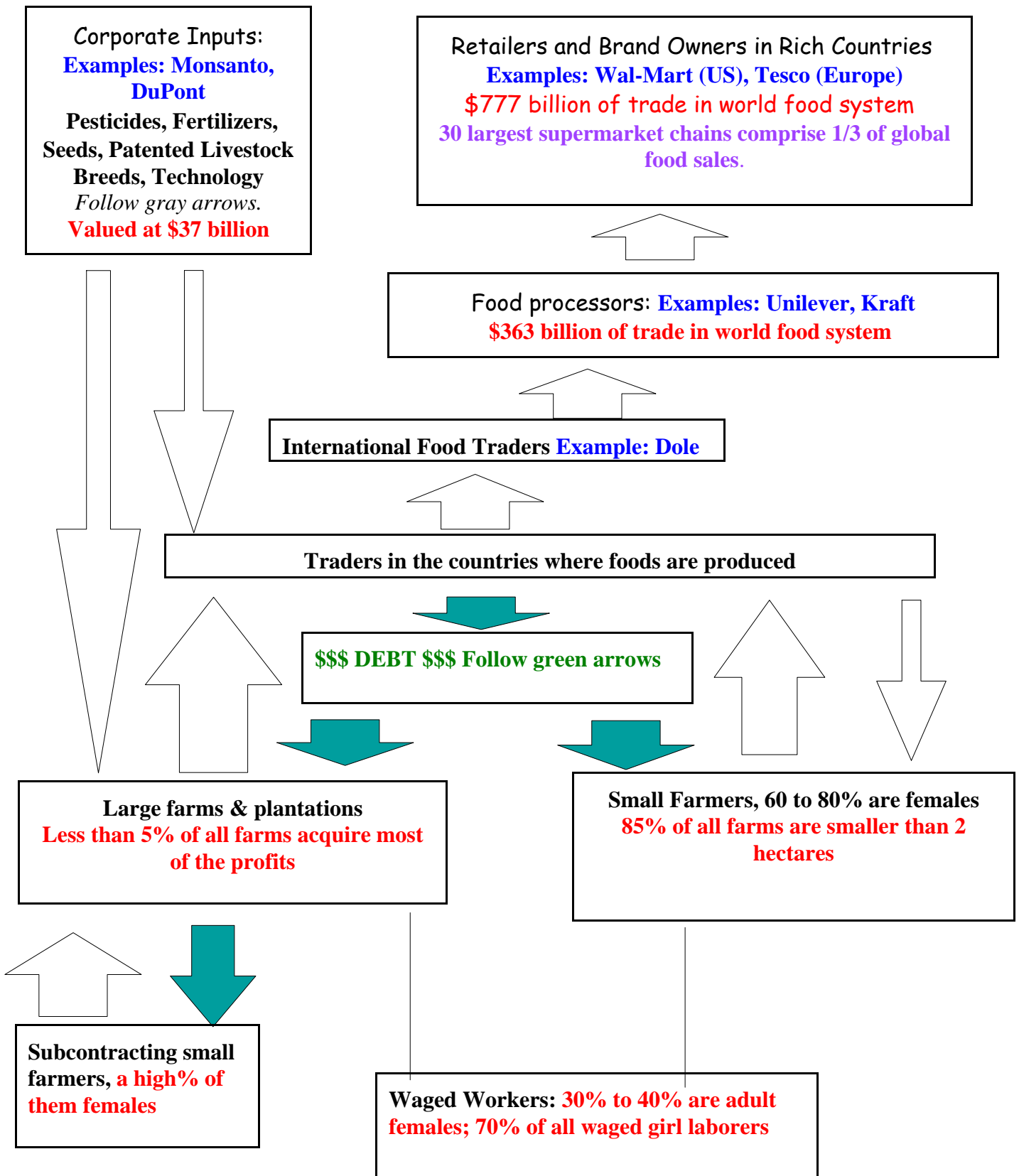
PERCENTAGE OF ECONOMICALLY-ACTIVE WOMEN WORKING IN AGRICULTURE, 1980-2010(PROJECTED)

Year	World	Poor Countries
1980	55%	72%
1990	51%	68%
2000	49%	61%
2010 (projected)	41%	53%

# The Shift to Export Agriculture may account for the most significant threat to women's food production.

- **Oakland Institute (2008):**
- “In the last few decades, liberalization of agriculture, dismantling of state-run institutions like marketing boards, and specialization of developing countries in exportable cash crops, such as coffee, cotton, and flowers, has been stimulated by the World Bank, the IMF, and development banks.”
- Shift to non-food crops
- Elimination of food subsidies & food price ceilings
- Deregulation: Elimination of protective food tariffs

# THE GLOBALIZED FOOD CHAIN



## **EXPORT AGRICULTURE & MALNUTRITION**

In almost every Third World country, agricultural exports have increased dramatically since 1985. At the same time, the level of hunger and malnutrition has remained about the same or increased.

- ❑ 1 of every 2 farm laborers in Third World countries is malnourished!
- ❑ The children of agricultural laborers are much more likely to die from hunger than households in any other economic sector.

**Fewer and fewer Third World countries are  
*food self-sufficient.***

- ✓ Since 1985, 1/4 to 1/3 of the new debt accumulated by Third World countries: to pay for GRAIN imports

Before 1980, Mexico produced all its own food. Since trade liberalization, Mexico has increased its agricultural exports and now imports 43% of its food.

80% of Kenya's exports are agricultural, but Kenya imports 80% of its food.

- ✓ Import Dumping by Rich Countries

**World Bank:** “Removal of tariff barriers has allowed a handful of Northern countries to capture Third World markets by dumping heavily subsidized commodities while undermining local food production.”

# How GM High-Yielding Rice Complicates the Crisis: Women Farmers are producing less.

- GM rice requires higher levels of fertilizer & pesticides for which costs have soared due to rising oil prices. In addition, government programs train males to handle these chemicals.
- High-yielding seeds require more work: transplanting, weeding.
- Pesticides kill fish that grown in rice paddies (loss of a subsistence food).
- Greater health threats to females due to longer time in water: malaria, schistosomiasis, pregnancy risks.
- Greater reliance on irrigation technologies which increase male control.

*Food sovereignty is the peoples', countries' or state unions' RIGHT to define their agricultural and food policy, without any dumping vis-à-vis third countries. Food sovereignty includes:*

- *prioritizing local agricultural production in order to feed the people, access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds, and credit. Hence the need for land reforms, for fighting against GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), for free access to seeds, and for safeguarding water as a public good to be sustainably distributed.*
- *the right of farmers, peasants to produce food and the right of consumers to be able to decide what they consume, and how and by whom it is produced.*
- *the right of Countries to protect themselves from too low priced agricultural and food imports.*
- *agricultural prices linked to production costs : they can be achieved if the Countries or Unions of States are entitled to impose taxes on excessively cheap imports, if they commit themselves in favour of a sustainable farm production, and if they control production on the inner market so as to avoid structural surpluses.*
- *the populations taking part in the agricultural policy choices.*
- *the recognition of women farmers' rights, who play a major role in agricultural production and in food.*

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